



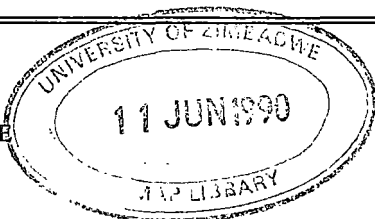
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**MEASURES OF INDUSTRIAL
DISTRIBUTION IN ZIMBABWE**



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REGIONS IN THE MAGISTERIAL DISTRICTS
OF INANDA AND LOWER TUGELA, NATAL**

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ZIMBABWE'S APPROACH TO PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT

by

G. CHILD

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INTRODUCTION

Zimbabwe views wildlife and protected areas as renewable natural resources which can and should be used sympathetically in the long term service of man, a philosophy that is embodied in the Parks and Wild Life Act, 1975. This paper limits itself to a brief examination of the approaches that have been evolved towards protected area management which seem appropriate to our local setting.

The Act recognises six classes of protected area within the Parks and Wild Life Estate and gives a clear indication as to how each should be administered, managed, developed and used. This direction is further refined by Area Policy Documents, approved by the Minister on the recommendation of an advisory board, which interpret how the legislation is to be applied in each area or group of contiguous areas.

Application of these directives is entrusted to the Department of National Parks and Wild Life Management, an arm of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. The Department is a scientifically based and ecologically oriented land use agency with a special responsibility, on behalf of the people of Zimbabwe, to ensure the proper conservation and use of the nation's parks and wildlife resources. Its key objectives include the administration and management of the Estate which covers the protection of landscapes of special quality, the conservation of representative samples of natural ecosystems and all organisms indigenous to Zimbabwe, and to conserve and manage natural and semi-natural areas for a range of outdoor recreational pursuits, for the long term benefit, enjoyment and cultural inspiration of the citizens of this country and their visitors.

These responsibilities and objectives are accomplished by:

- (i) protecting and managing the Estate which consists of all National Parks, Botanical Reserves, Botanical Gardens, Sanctuaries, Safari Areas and Recreational Parks;
- (ii) research and development of appropriate land management practices inside and adjacent to areas in the Estate;
- (iii) promoting public awareness in all sectors of society of the values of the Estate;
- (iv) promoting appropriate uses of the Estate; and
- (v) providing an appropriate administration and the training and development of staff to facilitate and support these functions and to encourage a rationalised and appropriate industry based on the Estate.

THE PARKS AND WILD LIFE ESTATE

The Parks and Wild Life Estate covers some 12.5% of Zimbabwe. The six classes of protected area were evolved independently of the IUCN classification, but mirror them remarkably closely if we allow that the protection of national monuments and cultural areas is not a function of the Estate. The criteria for classifying areas is based on the types of permissible use which is further refined through park zonation.

Typically parks in Zimbabwe are divided into four types of zones:

- (i) Special Conservation Areas, including biological reserves, refuges, witness stands or areas reserved for research, where access is limited to that needed for scientific purposes;
- (ii) Wilderness Areas, mostly large areas with the minimal development to which the public is permitted in low numbers but where visitors have considerable freedom of action;
- (iii) Wild Areas, where reasonable public access is available and where a greater density of visitors is permitted under more restrictive conditions than would apply in a Wilderness Area; and
- (iv) Development Areas, for staff facilities and visitor amenities where there is permanent or seasonal accommodation for visitors and/or staff.

It has been accepted for over 20 years in Zimbabwe that protected areas can not be isolated from their surrounding areas. The buffer zone concept was introduced in 1960, but even by then it was clear that such areas of inter-grading land use could only apply where population density around a park was low. Where this did not apply the challenge was to create park values that were appreciated by neighbouring rural communities. This presents many practical challenges and attempts to achieve this aim have met with varying success since the early 1960s.

While altruistic park values are accepted and respected in Zimbabwe, there is still considerable emphasis on the role of protected areas in raising rural living standards and generating national revenue through domestic and foreign tourism. Economic considerations may fade with time, but at this stage in the history of the country they are a powerful force in favour of the maintenance of protected areas.

RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION OF BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Not surprisingly in the African context of rapidly changing habitats, the thrust of protected area research has been towards gaining sufficient ecological understanding so as to protect and manage natural ecosystems within the parameters laid down by policy. Africa, with its heavy populations of dominant herbivores such as elephant that can radically modify habitats within a decade, faces challenges that do not occur in anything like the same magnitude elsewhere. These, together with such influences as the changing frequencies of wild fire, can have a profound effect on local habitats in a surprisingly short time and many of these changes result in long lasting responses in the environment.

It is only now that serious efforts are being made towards an evaluation of human attitudes towards the setting aside of protected areas and towards their use by man. This presents a whole new research horizon as we shift rapidly from an era devoted to taming the wilderness to one concerned with preserving examples of untamed wilderness against competing uses for the land, accepting that there is probably no such thing as pristine wilderness in Africa.

The dynamic kaleidoscope of ecological and sociological changes against the history and cultures of Africa provides a challenging medium in which to develop acceptable norms with which to guide protected area management. At this stage our knowledge is lacking and our tools are primitive as we grope to evolve concepts that will achieve goals that have yet to be fully defined and agreed universally. Against this background the park manager must be seen to be resolute and must strive to combine aesthetic judgment and the technical information at his disposal in following a few basic principles towards attaining an objective that seems logical at this stage in our development.

In Zimbabwe we accept the dynamic nature of most natural ecosystems and the fact that they have been modified to an unknown extent by man. Our aim is thus to preserve natural areas in a state approaching that which would have prevailed at the turn of the century when the influences of modern man began to accelerate. This means attempting to cushion these influences without blocking natural processes; an idealistic goal beset with difficulties. Under these conditions we can do no more than lay down key objectives with which to harness our limited management resource.

It is accepted that even within national parks it may be necessary to manage natural ecosystems that show clear signs of imbalance, especially where this is attributable to modern man or likely to result in a foreclosure of options. This procedure may be debatable, but is the only responsible course to follow in order to preserve biological diversity in an intrinsically dynamic system in a relatively small isolated area. Where overt action appears necessary, decisions are based on the best available scientific information and informed understanding using such techniques as developing a syndrome of different lines of evidence towards achieving the most specific conclusion possible. In so doing it is recognised that interference should be minimal and that there is often a time lag between causes and effects which are often removed from each other in space. Furthermore, attempts to maintain ecological diversity and to permit natural processes to proceed unhindered, or attempts to obtain maximum ecological stability and to obtain a particular successional stage including the climax, on the same ground, may be self defeating.

A management authority can do no more than set pragmatic goals that are attainable under local circumstances and which are attainable with the resources available. This means laying down clear cut policy guidelines that inhibit management from short term vacillations in response to temporary expediency, but which are sufficiently flexible in order to be able to adapt to longer term ecological, sociopolitical, economic or conceptual changes of more substance.

Research and management are integrated functions with a considerable proportion of our research effort being directed towards recognising ecological imbalances at an early stage and before they proceed beyond critical thresholds, when remedial action becomes both difficult and expensive. It must test and recommend appropriate action and then ensure

that this is achieving the desired result. Such an ecological "book-keeping" runs the risk of stagnating unless supplemented by problem oriented research aimed at enhancing its efficiency through a better understanding of the mechanisms involved.

PUBLIC USES AND BENEFITS

As noted, the maximum levels of development and visitor usage within a protected area or part thereof are laid down in policy. Recreational Parks cater for relatively high numbers of visitors and act as both an inducement for people to go to higher quality areas and a safety valve acting against the over use and abuse of these areas. The aim is to offer a variety of outdoor recreational pursuits catering for a range of pockets and tastes without undermining the aesthetic qualities of the various areas that combine to form the Parks and Wild Life Estate.

Consumptive uses such as recreational hunting or commercial fishing are strictly controlled and limited to some classes of protected area such as Safari Areas or Recreational Parks. But even in National Parks we face the dilemma of whether or not to allow angling and the collection of dead wood for domestic fuel. Attempts have been made to rationalise the angling question by the laying down of policy guidelines for each area in the Estate, but the firewood issue is still under debate.

On the other hand, where overt action in a national park determined entirely by the ecological considerations results in useful products these are disposed of to the benefit of the park, either to local communities at a low price in the interests of softening the hard edge around the park, or to best advantage for revenue. The question then arises as to whether or not wild populations in a national park should be used towards achieving country-wide conservation aims, such as the reseedling of areas of local extinction. The Parks and Wildlife Board recently recommended this as a legitimate use of the resources in national parks.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing touches on some of the constitutionalised structure and lines of thinking that influence protected area management in Zimbabwe. An attempt is made to draw attention to a few of the open questions that separate the purist and the pragmatist in evolving a management strategy for a national park system and its relationships to neighbouring areas and the country as a whole.



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